



Department of State

TELEGRAM

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SECRET

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DDI/SRS

R 191848Z MAY 72
FM USDEL FRANCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5825
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SAIGON

08148

SECRET SECTION 1 OF 3 USDEL FRANCE 9743

EXDIS

SUBJECT: COMMENTS OF LE DUC THO TO FRENCH COMMUNIST LEADERS

SUMMARY [REDACTED] PASSED US FOLLOWING REPORT

25X1

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DUC THO DISCUSSED THE CAREFULLY RESERVED BUT NOT NEGATIVE SOVIET POSITION WITH RESPECT TO THE PLANNED DRV OFFENSIVE, HANOI'S ACKNOWLEDGED NEED FOR CHINESE CO-OPERATION IN RESUPPLY IF THE BOMBINGS CONTINUED, THE LACK OF UNANIMITY WITHIN THE PARTY ON THE DECISION TO LAUNCH THE OFFENSIVE, HANOI'S ADMITTED MISCALCULATION AS TO THE PRESIDENT'S REACTION TO THE OFFENSIVE, THE ENSUING ESTIMATE THAT MILITARY ACTION WOULD SLOW DOWN AND DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY WOULD HAVE TO SPEED UP IN ORDER TO ATTAIN POLITICAL VICTORY, AND THE ASSUMPTION THAT ONCE A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT WERE BROUGHT ABOUT IN SAIGON, HANOI'S PLANS, WHICH HAD NOT CHANGED SINCE 1945, WOULD BE "SATISFIED IN EVERY SPHERE." LE DUC THO STRESSED THE NEED TO HAVE THE PARIS PLENARIES AND PRIVATE SESSIONS RESUMED SO THAT CESSATION OF BOMBING COULD BE ATTAINED. VO VAN SUNG, IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION, CONCEDED THE DEVASTATING PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE BOMBINGS. END SUMMARY

BEGIN TEXT

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ACTIVITIES OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS

AT THE PRESENT TIME THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS ARE MEETING FREQUENTLY WITH THEIR FRENCH COMRADES IN THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY. THE VIET-NAM ISSUE REMAINS AN ITEM OF BUSINESS FOR BOTH GROUPS AND SCARCELY AN HOUR GOES BY WITHOUT SOME CONTACT BETWEEN THEM, EITHER DIRECT OR BY TELEPHONE. LE DUC THO IN PARTICULAR ENJOYS DISCUSSIONS WITH MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY, THE PEACE MOVEMENT, OR THE ASSOCIATIONS (48), PARTICULARLY THE FRANCO-VIETNAMESE FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT FOLLOWING THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE USSR, THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS ASKED LE DUC THO IF IT WERE CORRECT THAT THE OFFENSIVE IN SOUTH VIET-NAM HAD IN FACT BEEN LAUNCHED DESPITE THE TOTAL DISAPPROVAL OF THE MOSCOW LEADERS. LE DUC THO SEEMED EMBARRASSED AND REPLIED AS FOLLOWS:

"FOR A LONG TIME NOW, THE DRV HAS BEEN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO SET UP THE NLF IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. THE OPERATIONS OF SAIGON TROOPS IN LOWER LAOS SHOWED US THAT, CONTRARY TO WHAT WAS BEING PUBLISHED, VIETNAMIZATION COULD NOT POSE ANY OBSTACLE TO OUR OPERATION EVEN IF THEY TOOK PLACE FAR FROM OUR BASES IN THE NORTH. AFTER LONG DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THE PARTY, WE DECIDED THAT WE HAD TO MAKE ALL NECESSARY PREPARATIONS TO LAUNCH OUR ATTACKS AT A GIVEN TIME. THE SOVIETS, WHO HAD BEEN INFORMED (THIS WAS IN 1971), TOLD US THAT THEY WOULD PROVIDE ALL NECESSARY ASSISTANCE BUT THEY DID NOT WANT TO ADVISE US ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. THIS WAS, ABOVE ALL, BECAUSE THEY KNEW PEKING WAS VERY MUCH IN FAVOR OF SUCH A PLAN. SO IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING, WE ACTED ALONE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT MOSCOW CONDEMNS US, BECAUSE THEY CONTINUE TO PROVIDE US WITH ASSISTANCE...

*Le Duc Tho's statement
seems to be in support of
what we have been told
provided we are sure*

*does not mean Chinese
in favor of offensive*

WHAT THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS DID NOT TELL LE DUC THO WAS THAT THEY HAD LEARNED THROUGH THEIR REPRESENTATIVE IN HANOI, THEO RONCO, THAT UNANIMITY OF OPINION HAD NOT BEEN REACHED. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE PRO-CHINESE FACTOR HAD CARRIED THE DAY ONCE AGAIN. GIAP HIMSELF REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE HAD RESERVATIONS IN THE EVENT THAT "SUPPLY," OR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE

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*was Giap in
opposition
very doubtful*

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HO CHI MINH TRAIL, MADE IT NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO GET THE NECESSARY MATERIAL INTO THE SOUTH -- DESPITE ALL THE SUPPLY-BUILD-UP PRECAUTIONS TAKEN BY THE HIGH COMMAND.

THE PRO-CHINESE VIEWPOINT CALLS FOR HAVING ON SITE
(THE AREA AROUND SAIGON) ENOUGH MILITARY FORCES TO IN-
FLUENCE THE POPULATION AND ENABLE THE POLITICAL CADRES
TO REVERSE THE SITUATION. THE PRO-CHINESE WERE GUIDED
BY THE LESSON LEARNED IN 1968. THEY BELIEVE THAT WITH
A SERIOUS THREAT AGAINST SAIGON, ONCE THIS CITY HAS
BEEN COMPLETELY AND SOLIDLY SURROUNDED BY THE ELITE TROOPS
OF THE DRV, THE POLITICAL CADRES, WITH THE HELP OF THE
FOREIGN PRESS, WILL BE ABLE TO BRING THE POPULATION
TO REVERSE MOMENTUM IN FAVOR OF HANOI. THIS WILL MEAN
THE FORCED DEPARTURE OF PRESIDENT THIEU, AND THE COM-
MUNISTS WILL HAVE WON.

foresee military pressure leading to patterned uprising

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 7026 W.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5826
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SAIGON

SECRET SECTION 2 OF 3 USDEL FRANCE 9743

EXDIS

SUBJECT: COMMENTS OF LE DUC THO TO FRENCH COMMUNIST LEADERS

(ACTION IN THE VICINITY OF THE DEMARCATION LINE, ALTHOUGH NOT CONSIDERED USEFUL BY THE DRV, WOULD IN FACT BE ONLY A DIVERSION TO DRAW SAIGON TROOPS INTO THIS REGION AND HOLD THEM THERE. IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE DRV, WHICH CAN EASILY SUPPLY THE QUANG TRI FRONT, NOT TO BE "ELIMINATED" FROM THE SECTOR WHERE ITS TROOPS ARE NOW INFILTRATING; TAY NINH, SOUTH-EAST CAMBODIA, AND THE OTHER SUPPORT BASES THAT THEY ARE ESTABLISHING "CLANDESTINELY." END SOURCE'S COMMENTS.)

LE DUC THO, WHO IS QUITE AUTHORITATIVE, AND WHO HAS NUMEROUS FRIENDS IN THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY, TOLD THEM: WE ARE OBLIGED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DESIRES OF OUR NEAREST NEIGHBORS, AND IF THE BOMBINGS CONTINUE WE WILL NEED THEIR HELP IN TRANSPORTING MATERIEL. WE CANNOT ALWAYS REJECT THEIR SUGGESTIONS OR ADVICE, EVEN IF WE DISCUSS IT WITH OUR SOVIET FRIENDS, WHO UNDERSTAND US BETTER. TAKING THESE "OBLIGATIONS" INTO ACCOUNT, WE FINALLY REACHED OUR DECISION WITHIN THE PARTY, AND ALTHOUGH I CANNOT TELL YOU HOW THE VOTING WENT, THE DECISION WAS FINALLY MADE ONLY AS A RESULT OF A MAJORITY VOTE. IT MUST BE SAID THAT THE YOUNG DO NOT SEE THE PROBLEM IN THE SAME TERMS AS THE OLD, AND BECAUSE OF THIS, DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ARE INEVITABLE. THE ESSENTIAL POINT IS THAT FOR THE MOMENT, DISCIPLINE WITHIN

USO causing a loss of
report status of allies

difference along ego lines



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THE PARTY IS "SOLID."

QUESTION BY Y. MOREAU: DO YOU THINK THAT THE POPULATION OF THE SOUTH WILL RALLY TO THE NLF IF THE OFFENSIVE CONTINUES AS IT HAS BEGUN AND ACHIEVES EVEN AN INCOMPLETE VICTORY IN THE FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE?

LE DUC THO: WE THINK SO, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PROGNOSTICATE. ONE UNKNOWN FOR US AT THE TIME OF LAUNCHING THE OFFENSIVE TURNED OUT TO BE A SURPRISE: THE POSITION TAKEN BY NIXON. WE HAD CONSIDERED IT, BUT HAD ELIMINATED THIS EVENTUALITY AS IMPOSSIBLE DURING THE YEAR OF THE PEKING AND MOSCOW VISITS AND DURING A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR IN THE USA. THIS WAS A MISTAKE, BUT NOT A CATASTROPHIC ONE. THE ONLY DISADVANTAGE IS THAT MILITARY ACTION WILL BE SLOWED DOWN AND IN ORDER TO WIN A POLITICAL VICTORY WE WILL HAVE TO STEP UP OUR DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES.

Y. MOREAU: COULD YOU HOLD OUT FOR A LONG TIME IF THE BLOCKADE IS EFFECTIVE AND IF THE INTENSIVE BOMBINGS PARALYSE ACTIVITY IN THE DRV?

LE DUC THO: THE SITUATION WILL BE ARDOUS, LIFE WILL BE HARD, BUT WE HAVE COME THROUGH OTHER TESTS. WE ARE ORGANIZED TO GO ON FOR A LONG TIME -- WHICH DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ENJOY IT. WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE IS PRESIDENT THIEU'S DEPARTURE. HE, AND HE ALONE, STANDS IN THE WAY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR PLANS, WHICH HAVE NOT CHANGED SINCE 1945. WE WILL REACH OUR GOALS BY SETTING UP ANOTHER GOVERNMENT IN SAIGON, ALL THE REST ONLY WORKS TOWARD THIS END. WITH ANOTHER GOVERNMENT SET UP WE WILL GET IMMEDIATE SATISFACTION IN EVERY SPHERE.

LE DUC THO SIMPLIFIED THE PROBLEM IN THIS WAY TO SHOW HIS COMRADES IN THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY WHAT THEY COULD DO TO HELP:

-- SHOW JURIDICALLY THAT THE DRV HAS THE RIGHT TO SUPPORT ITS COMPATRIOTS IN THE SOUTH. THAT THE 1956 ELECTIONS DID NOT TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED...

-- THAT PRESIDENT THIEU IS THE AGENT OF US TRUSTS

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*had anticipated
Nixon's move
will cause us
draw to our periphery*

X

*goals not changed
the theme remains
as before*



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AND THE CIA. THAT ONLY HE CAN GUARANTEE TO US BUSINESS. MEN INTERESTS IN THE SOUTH. IT IS NOT, THEREFORE, THE PEOPLE WHO KEEP HIM IN POWER, BUT "FOREIGNERS." HE MUST, THEREFORE, BE REPLACED IN ORDER TO HAVE PEACE RIGHT AWAY...

.. SHOW THAT THE VIETNAMESE POLITICAL FIGURES AND MILITARY MEN WHO OPPOSED THE AMERICANS AND WHO ARE LIVING IN FRANCE ARE NOT "COMMUNISTS." THE ONLY GOAL OF THEIR ACTION WAS TO FREE VIET-NAM FROM FOREIGNERS, IMPLYING THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ALLIES.

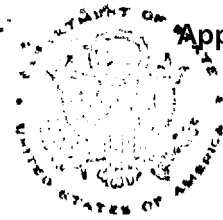
.. SHOW THAT THE CATHOLICS THEMSELVES HAVE REVISED THEIR POSITION CONCERNING NORTH VIET-NAM AND ARE READY TO COLLABORATE WITH A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION WHICH WOULD REPLACE THIEU'S GOVERNMENT.

.. TAKE STEPS TO ATTAIN THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE CONVENING OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE WHICH WILL PERMIT SECRET CONTACTS, WHICH WE NEED GREATLY AT THIS TIME, TO BE RESUMED. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY THAT WE CAN GET A CESSATION OF THE BOMBING OF THE NORTH.

IN ANY CASE, THE MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY UNDERSTOOD THAT PRESIDENT THIEU IS THE MAN TO BRING DOWN AND THE SOONER THE BETTER. THIS IS WHAT THEY WILL TRY TO DO. ALL THE ELEMENTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CONCORD OR UNITY ARE ALREADY IN EXISTENCE, ACCORDING TO LE DUC THO. AS SOON AS IT IS SET UP, THE POPULATION OF THE SOUTH WILL LOSE ALL INTEREST IN THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT AND WILL ACCEPT THE NEW SITUATION WITHOUT ANY REACTION. BESIDES, WHAT COULD THEY DO?

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INFO OCT-01 /026 W

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 USDEL FRANCE 9743

EXDIS

VO VAN SUNG

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VO VAN SUNG: HERE IS A LETTER FROM THEO RONCO WHICH
SETS FORTH PRECISELY THE SITUATION IN THE DRV.
AS FOR ME, HERE IS WHAT I HAVE TO TELL YOU:

THE BOMBINGS ARE APPALLING AND MURDEROUS. THE
POPULATION, OUT OF THE HABIT, IS BEGINNING TO SUFFER
FROM SHOCK, ESPECIALLY IN HAIPHONG AND HANOI, WHERE
WOMEN ARE IN THE GREAT MAJORITY. WE (HANOI) ASK YOU TO
USE ALL YOUR INFLUENCE TO PUT AN END TO THE BOMBINGS!
IN THE END WE WILL OVERCOME THE BLOCKADE, BUT THE BOMBINGS
MUST BE STOPPED. (VO VAN SUNG REPEATED THE SAME REQUEST
SEVERAL TIMES. HIS SINCERITY DID NOT SEEM FALSE.) IN
THE END, IT IS THE NERVOUS SYSTEM WHICH BREAKS DOWN,
AND TO CARRY ON A STRUGGLE IN THESE CONDITIONS, YOU
HAVE TO BE STRONG. WE ARE STRONG AND WE SAY SO, BUT WE
OWE YOU, OUR COMRADES, THE TRUTH. THE EXPLOSIVES USED
AT THE PRESENT TIME ARE NOT ONLY EXTREMELY MURDEROUS AND
DEVASTATING, BUT EQUALLY APPALLING BECAUSE OF THE NOISE.
HOW CAN NIXON BE STOPPED? WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY. IT
IS INDISPENSABLE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE BEST WAY IS TO
OBTAIN THE RESUMPTION OF THE WORK OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE,
OTHERWISE WE ARE AT A STANDSTILL. POSSIBLY FRANCE HAS
SOME INFLUENCE ON THE UNITED STATES. IT IS HERE THEN
THAT WE HAVE THE GREATEST CHANCE OF BEING HEARD.

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REFERENCE MUST BE RESUMED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. UNFORTUNATELY THIS IS NOT UP TO US. WE CAN, AND HAVE BEGUN, TO ORGANIZE OUR STRUGGLE TO THIS EFFECT. WE ALSO THINK THAT IF THE CONFERENCE RESUMES, THE PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WILL RESUME AT THE SAME TIME.

LATEST NEWS ON PRESIDENT THIEU (BASED ON A CONVERSATION

[REDACTED] HOW DOES IT HAPPEN THAT YOUR DEMAND IS CONCERNED EXCLUSIVELY WITH PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU? THO: THERE ARE TWO REASONS FOR THIS. THE FIRST IS THAT WHEN HE LEAVES, HIS SUPPORTERS AND ASSOCIATES WILL LEAVE ALSO. THE SECOND IS THAT IT IS EASIER TO ASK FOR HIS DEPARTURE SINCE HE WAS NOT BORN IN THE SOUTH AND WE KNOW THAT THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR THE POLITICAL FIGURES IN THE SOUTH.

[REDACTED] ALTHOUGH I AGREE WITH YOU, IS THERE NO CHANCE OF DEALING WITH HIM?

THO: IMPOSSIBLE, HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR VIETNAMIZATION. WITHOUT HIM, IT WILL FALL APART IMMEDIATELY. HE HAS ALSO "BECOME" -- NECESSARILY -- OUR NO. 1 ENEMY. HIS DEPARTURE IS IMPERATIVE. IN ADDITION, THIS IS A TEST FOR US AGAINST THE AMERICANS. THROUGH OUR DEMANDS, WE COME TO KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER NIXON WILL SUPPORT HIM. AS SOON AS HE DROPS HIM, WE WILL HAVE WON. WE CAN, THEREFORE, GO SLOWLY, BUT WITHOUT LETTING UP...

[REDACTED] WHAT CAN WE DO THROUGH OUR PROPAGANDA ACTION CONCERNING THIEU?

THO: CONTINUE TO DEMAND THIEU'S DEPARTURE FROM PRESIDENT NIXON, AS YOU ARE ALREADY DOING. WE HAVE TO PERSIST CONTINUOUSLY ON THIS "SLOGAN," BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT IT IS. IN THE LONG RUN, WE WILL GET SATISFACTION. THIS IS OUR POINT OF VIEW AND WE ARE CERTAIN THAT WE ARE NOT WRONG. FOURNIAU: ACCORDING TO THE VIETNAMESE OF LIEN HIEP, THERE WERE OTHER MEANS OF OBTAINING THIEU'S DEPARTURE. THO: I KNOW; WE HAVE OFTEN DEBATED THIS, BUT FOR THE MOMENT WE ARE AGAINST HIS "PHYSICAL ELIMINATION." IT WOULD MAKE A MARTYR OUT OF HIM AND THIS WOULD DO US MORE HARM THAN GOOD. THE ONES WHO ARE CONSIDERING THIS ARE THE NLF LEADERS, BUT WE WANT HIM TO LEAVE OF HIS OWN ACCORD. THIS GESTURE WILL GIVE US GREAT POLITICAL STRENGTH. SO LET US GO ON LIKE THIS, AS LONG AS THE NLF HAS NOT ACHIEVED ITS AIMS.

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Test for us v. americans

SVN self-serv

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NLF favors Thieu's physical elimination



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TRAN DINH LAN
SAID TO HAVE MET WITH LEDUC THO AND XUAN THUY BEFORE
HIS DEPARTURE FOR HANOI. THIS IS WHAT THEY REPORTEDLY
TOLD HIM:

"KEEP IT UP, YOU ARE DOING GOOD WORK. IT IS
MEN LIKE YOU THAT WE NEED IN THE GOVERNMENT OF BROAD
NATIONAL UNION. MILITARY MEN, LIKE YOU ESPECIALLY,
WILL BE ABLE TO BE VERY USEFUL DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD
WHICH WILL BE THE MOST COMPLEX. IN ADDITION TO BEING
COMPETENT, THEY WILL NEED FIRM MORAL QUALITIES AND WILL
HAVE TO BE PROVEN NATIONALISTS AND PATRIOTS...MANY
VIETNAMESE HAVE THE "RIGHT" IDEAS, BUT FEW HAVE THE
COURAGE TO SHOW THEM PUBLICLY AT THIS TIME IN
FAVOR OF THE PATRIOTS WHO ARE FIGHTING AGAINST THE
BIGGEST CAPITALIST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. FOR THAT, WE
THANK YOU..."

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